Yes, there is a choice available. So, people do exercise that choice and sometimes that choice is in favour of not the public carrier, but...

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Their choice is judicious. ...(*Interruptions*)...

SHRI PRAFUL PATEL: But, I can assure you, Jayaji that the Indian Airlines is not, mind you, the branding and the name, nothing has changed. It is only a perception that we have changed everything. No, nothing. The Indian and the Indian Airlines is one and the same. It is only on the aircraft, it is a kind of a branding. We cannot go into all those issues, sitting in Parliament. Everything is done by the companies, and let them do what they have to do. We should not be deciding what branding they want. But the fact is that yes there are things which need to be done to make it even better. Nobody is denying that there is a scope for correction and doing better. I appreciate the sentiments with which you have raised this issue. But I can also tell you that I also get the sheet of performance and passengers carried by all the carriers, including the Indian Airlines, and it is not as bad as we make it out to be that people do not want to fly by Indian Airlines, and they want to fly by any other airline. But I can also tell you...(*Interruptions*)...I have accepted that this is an area of concern and there is a scope for improvement.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Next Question...(*Interruptions*)...

श्रीमती जया बच्चन: सर, मंत्री जी ने मेरे सवाल का सही जवाब नहीं दिया है और उन्होंने अपने वर्ड्स में उलझा कर रख दिया। मैं यह पूछना चाह रही थी कि परसैप्शन हटाने के लिए आप क्या रहे हैं?

*286. [The questioner(s) SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA and PROF. ALKA BALRAM KSHATRIYA were absent. For answer *vide* page 34 *infra*.]

Filling up of vacancies in IA in Chennai

*287. SHRI SK. KHABIR UDDIN AHMED: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) the number of vacant posts in Southern Regional Establishment of Indian Airlines in Chennai, post-wise;

(b) by when, these vacancies will be filled up; and

(c) whether casual labours are being engaged against the vacancies?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) to (c) A Statement is laid on the table of the House.

Statement-I

(a) The number of vacant posts in subordinate cadres under the administrative control of Southern Regional Establishment in Indian Airlines at Chennai are given in the Statement-I (*See* below). The vacancy position is based on work norms prevailing in early 90s, which have undergone change in the current civil aviation scenario.

(b) While reverting the retirement age from 60 to 58 years in February, 2000, the Government had further decided that there would be a freeze on external recruitment in non-operational categories. As such, to operate efficiently in a highly competitive environment, Indian Airlines is resorting to minimal recruitment in select critical operational categories only. A settlement has been signed with the Air Corporation's Employees Union, a recognized union in Indian Airlines, which provides for improvement in work practices, multiskilling, re-deployment, outsourcing of certain activities and restructuring. The proposal for merger of Air India and Indian Airlines and privatisation of airports has also necessitated review of the manpower requirement.

(c) Engagement of casual labour is resorted to on day-to-day basis in view of the peculiarities of the airline industry and to meet contingency and unforeseen circumstances such as long absenteeism or to meet the operational requirements arising out of disruption of service due to unpredictable reasons.

Statement-II

Details of vacant posts in Southern Region Establishment of Indian Airlines at Chennai (pertaining to subordinate cadres)

Sl. No.	Post	No. of vacant posts
1.	Traffic Assistant/Supdt.	36
2.	Catering Assistant/Supdt.	06
3.	Office Assistant/Typist	14
4.	Stenographers	15
5.	Accounts/Audit Assistant	27
6.	Ch. Pharmacist/Pharmacist	01
7.	Chief Telephone Optr.	12
8.	Security Assistant/Supdt.	11
9.	Technicians	18
10.	Plant Technician	12
11.	Stores and Supplies Asstt./Supdt.	04
12.	Operations Assistant	09
13.	Operators	16
14.	Daftary/Dup.Optr.	01
15.	Peon/Gardner	06
16.	Cook Canteen	02
17.	Security Guard	15
18.	Drivers	20
19.	Helper (Commercial)	137
20.	Helper (Catering)	36
21.	Helper (Engg./GSD)	29
22.	Canteen Helper	19
23.	Helper (Stores)	08
24.	Safaiwala	18

SHRI SK. KHABIR UDDIN AHMED: Sir, it is a fact that casual or contract workers are being engaged in permanent and perennial jobs in the airline industry. They are being employed in various works, including cargo handling. Sir, the hon. Minister's reply also admits it. *Vide* part (c) of his reply it is stated that the casual labour is resorted to meet contingency and unforeseen circumstances such as long absenteeism or to meet the operational requirements. This is irregular as per the present law, and this practice intoduces hire-and-fire system through backdoor. Will you please reverse this practice and regularise the present contingent and casual labours engaged in the airline industry?

SHRI PRAFUL PATEL: Sir, as far as the airline industry is concerned, it is a larger question, but the spirit of the hon. Member's question is related to the Indian Airlines. I just want to say that in the airlines, the entire aviation scenario has changed. The competition has come in this sector. In the good old days, there used to be only our public sector carrier, and it used to operate under a different environment. Now, in competition with our airlines, the scenario has changed. I would like to inform the hon. Member that the employee to aircraft ratio in the Indian Airlines and Air India is still very, very high compared to other carriers. In 2000, it was decided that there will be a freeze on recruitment in the non-operational category. Therefore, most of the people, who the hon. Member is talking about, are the people who are in the non-operational category. However, we have a Supreme Court judgement in this matter which says that the casuals who have been empanelled should be given preference for regularisation of their service consistent with the scheme which has been framed by the Indian Airlines. So, based on that, things are moving. Naturally, when the Supreme Court has given a direction and we have agreed to, we will follow it.

SHRI SK. KHABIR UDDIN AHMED: Sir, I would like to know what are the benefits, salary, etc. that you are providing to the casual labour engaged in the regular and operational jobs, which you have admitted in the reply, as compared to the regular workers.

SHRI PRAFUL PATEL: Sir, the casual labour and the permanent workers cannot be completely on a par. There are details, if he would like to know, I would be happy to provide them because there cannot be only one category of casual workers. The casual workers do not come only under one category. There are many categories. If the hon. Member would like to have these details, I would be happy to provide.

SHRI B.S. GNANADESIKAN: Sir, I would like to take this opportunity to get a clarification from the hon. Minister on an alarming situation at Chennai Airport because of the vacancy position which has been shown in Annexure-I, particularly helpers, is more than 200. Sir, at the airport counters of the Indian Airlines, there are no helpers. Due to paucity of staff there is delay in issuing tickets. There is also a problem at the time of loading and unloading, into the aircraft and out of the aircraft, because of the paucity of staff. As a result of this, the departure of the Indian Airlines aircraft is also delayed. I would like to know whether this condition would be taken note of by the hon. Minister and early steps will be taken to redress this problem.

SHRI PRAFUL PATEL: Sir, I will look into the concern raised by the hon. Member.

Opening of new agriculture accounts

*288. SHRI SUDARSHAN AKARAPU: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of new agriculture accounts opened by banks during the last three years, year-wise;

(b) what are the targets set for opening new agriculture accounts during the current financial year (2006-07) and the achievements made there against as on 31st October, 2006; and

(c) the total amount of agriculture credit disbursed by banks during the last three years *vis-a-vis* the targets set by Government/RBI?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (c) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) The total number of new agriculture accounts opened by Banks (Commercial Banks, Cooperative Banks and Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) during the last three years are as under:

(Nos. in Lakh)

Year	Commercial Banks	Cooperative Banks	Regional Rural Banks	Total
2004-05	47.74	12.52	18.58	78.84
2005-06	47.27	14.43	17.03	78.73
2006-07*	29.81	7.9	10.51	48.22

(Upto 31st October, 2006)